

1881
*The present State of Europe compared with Antient
Prophecies;*

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE GRAVEL PIT MEETING IN HACKNEY,

FEBRUARY 28, 1794,

Being the Day appointed for a General Fast.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.

WITH A PREFACE,

CONTAINING THE

Reasons for the Author's leaving England.

THIRD EDITION.

B. Quo fugis? Expecta. Liceat condiscere causas
Diffidii. Tu nostra, puer, nisi fallor, amabas
Pascua.

P. Parce, Parens, dammare tuum.—Tibi lætior annis
Tunc animus fuerat. Nunc intractabilis, asper.

Petrarch on taking leave of his patron, the Cardinal Colonna.

Nos patriæ fines, nos dulcia linquimus arva.

Virgil.

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1794.

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PREFACE.

THIS discourse, and those on the *Evidences of Divine Revelation*, which will be published about the same time, being the last of my labours in this country, I hope my friends, and the public, will indulge me while I give the reasons of their *being* the last, in consequence of my having at length, after much hesitation, and now with reluctance, come to a resolution to leave this kingdom.

After the riots in Birmingham, it was the expectation, and evidently the wish, of many persons, that I should immediately fly to France, or America. But I had no consciousness of guilt to induce me to fly my country*. On the contrary, I came directly to London, and instantly, by means of my friend Mr. Russell, signified to the king's ministers, that I

* If, instead of flying from lawless violence, I had been flying from public justice, I could not have been pursued with more rancour, nor could my friends have been more anxious for my safety. One man, who happened to see me on horseback on one of the nights in which I escaped from Birmingham, expressed his regret that he had not taken me, expecting probably some considerable reward, when, as he said, it was so easy for him to have done it. My friends earnestly advised me to disguise myself as I was going to London. But all that was done in that way was taking a place for me in the mail coach, which I entered at Worcester, in another name than my own. However, the friend who had the courage to receive me in London had thought it necessary to provide a dress that should disguise me, and also a method of making my escape, in case the house should have been attacked on my account; and for some time my friends would not suffer me to appear in the streets.

was there, and ready, if they thought proper, to be interrogated on the subject of the riot. But no notice was taken of the message.

Ill treated as I thought I had been, not merely by the populace of Birmingham, for they were the mere tools of their superiors, but by the country in general, which evidently exulted in our sufferings, and afterwards by the representatives of the nation, who refused to inquire into the cause of them, I own I was not without deliberating upon the subject of emigration; and several flattering proposals were made me, especially from France, which was then at peace within itself, and with all the world; and I was at one time much inclined to go thither, on account of its nearness to England, the agreeableness of its climate, and my having many friends there.

But I likewise considered that, if I went thither, I should have no employment of the kind to which I had been accustomed; and the season of active life not being, according to the course of nature, quite over, I wished to make as much use of it as I could. I therefore determined to continue in England, exposed as I was not only to unbounded obloquy and insult, but to every kind of outrage; and after my invitation to succeed my friend Dr. Price, I had no hesitation about it. Accordingly I took up my residence where I now am, though so prevalent was the idea of my insecurity, that I was not able to take the house in my own name; and when a friend of mine took it in *his*, it was with much difficulty that, after some time, the landlord was prevailed upon to transfer

transfer the lease to me. He expressed his apprehensions, not only of the house that I occupied being demolished, but also a capital house in which he himself resides, at the distance of no less than twenty miles from London, whither he supposed the rioters would go next, merely for suffering me to live in a house of *his*.

But even this does not give such an idea of the danger that not only myself, but every person, and every thing, that had the slightest connexion with me, were supposed to be in, as the following. The managers of one of the principal charities among the Dissenters applied to me to preach their annual sermon, and I had consented. But the treasurer, a man of fortune, who knew nothing more of me than my name, was so much alarmed at it, that he declared he could not sleep. I therefore, to his great relief, declined preaching at all.

When it was known that I was settled where I now am, several of my friends, who lived near me, were seriously advised to remove their papers, and other most valuable effects, to some place of greater safety in London. On the 14th of July, 1792, it was taken for granted by many of the neighbours, that my house was to come down, just as at Birmingham the year before. When the Hackney association was formed, several servants in the neighbourhood actually removed their goods; and when there was some political meeting at the house of Mr. Breillat, though about two miles from my house, a woman whose daughter was servant in the house

contiguous to mine, came to her mistress, to entreat that she might be out of the way; and it was not without much difficulty that she was pacified, and prevailed upon to continue in the house, her mistress saying that she was as safe as herself.

On several other occasions the neighbourhood has been greatly alarmed on account of my being so near them. Nor was this without apparent reason. I could name a person, and to appearance a reputable tradesman, who, in the company of his friends, in the hearing of one of my late congregation at Birmingham, but without knowing him to be such, declared that, in case of any disturbance, they would immediately come to Hackney, evidently for the purpose of mischief. In this state of things, it is not to be wondered at, that of many servants who were recommended to me, and some that were actually hired, very few could, for a long time, be prevailed upon to live with me.

These facts not only shew how general was the idea of my particular insecurity in this country; but what is of much more consequence, and highly interesting to the country at large, an idea of the general disposition to rioting and violence that prevails in it, and that the Dissenters are the objects of it. Mr. Pitt very justly observed, in his speech on the subject of the riots in Birmingham, that it was "the effervescence of the public mind." Indeed the effervescible matter has existed in this country ever since the civil wars in the time of Charles I. and it was particularly apparent in the reign of queen Ann. But the power of government under the former princes

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of the House of Hanover prevented its doing any mischief. The late events shew that this power is no longer exerted as it used to be, but that, on the contrary, there prevails an idea, well or ill founded, that tumultuary proceedings against Dissenters will not receive any effectual discouragement. After what has taken place with respect to Birmingham, all idea of much hazard for insulting and abusing the Dissenters is entirely vanished; whereas the disposition to injure the Catholics was effectually checked by the proceedings of the year 1780. From that time *they* have been safe, and I rejoice in it. But from the year 1791, the Dissenters have been more exposed to insult and outrage than ever.

Having fixed myself at Clapton; unhinged as I had been, and having lost the labour of several years; yet flattering myself that I should end my days here, I took a long lease of my house, and expended a considerable sum in improving it. I also determined, with the assistance of my friends, to resume my philosophical and other pursuits; and after an interruption amounting to about two years, it was with a pleasure that I cannot describe, that I entered my new laboratory, and began the most common preparatory processes, with a view to some original inquiries. With what success I have laboured, the public has already in some measure seen, and may see more hereafter.

But though I did not choose (notwithstanding I found myself exposed to continual insult) to leave my native country, I found it necessary to provide for &c sons elsewhere. My eldest son was settled in a

business, which promised to be very advantageous, at Manchester; but his partner, though a man of liberality himself, informed him, on perceiving the general prevalence of the spirit which produced the riots in Birmingham, that, owing to his relationship to *me*, he was under the necessity of proposing a separation, which accordingly took place.

On this he had an invitation to join another connexion, in a business in which the spirit of party could not have much affected him; but he declined it. And after he had been present at the assizes at Warwick, he conceived such an idea of this country, that I do not believe that any proposal, however advantageous, would have induced him to continue in it; so much was he affected on perceiving his father treated as I had been.

Determining to go to America, where he had no prospect but that of being a farmer, he wished to spend a short time with a person who has greatly distinguished himself in that way, and one who from his own general principles, and his friendship for myself, would have given him the best advice and assistance in his power. He, however, declined it, and acknowledged some time after, that had it been known, as it must have been, to his landlord, that he had a son of *mine* with him, he feared he should have been turned out of his farm.

My second son, who was present both at the riot, and the assizes, felt more indignation still, and willingly listened to a proposal to settle in France; and there his reception was but too flattering. However,

on

on the breaking out of the war with this country, all mercantile prospects being suspended, he wished to go to America. There his eldest and youngest brother have joined him, and they are now looking out for a settlement, having as yet no fixed views.

The necessity I was under of sending my sons out of this country, was my principal inducement to send the little property that I had out of it too; so that I had nothing in England besides my library, apparatus, and household goods. By this, I felt myself greatly relieved, it being of little consequence where a man already turned sixty ends his days. Whatever good or evil I have been capable of, is now chiefly done; and I trust that the same consciousness of integrity, which has supported me hitherto, will carry me through any thing that may yet be reserved for me. Seeing, however, no great prospect of doing much good, or having much enjoyment, here, I am now preparing to follow my sons; hoping to be of some use to them in their present unsettled state, and that Providence may yet, advancing in years as I am, find me some sphere of usefulness along with them.

As to the great odium that I have incurred, the charge of *sedition*, or my being an enemy to the constitution or peace of my country, is a mere pretence for it; though it has been so much urged, that it is now generally believed, and all attempts to undeceive the public with respect to it avail nothing at all. The whole course of my studies, from early life, shews how little *politics* of any kind have been my object. Indeed to have written so much as I
have

have in *theology*, and to have done so much in *experimental philosophy*, and at the same time to have had my mind occupied, as it is supposed to have been, with factious politics, I must have had faculties more than human. Let any person only cast his eye over the long list of my publications, and he will see that they relate almost wholly to theology, philosophy, or general literature.

I did, however, when I was a younger man, and before it was in my power to give much attention to philosophical pursuits, write a small anonymous political pamphlet, on the *State of Liberty in this Country*, about the time of Mr. Wilkes's election for Middlesex, which gained me the acquaintance, and I may say the friendship, of Sir George Savile, and which I had the happiness to enjoy as long as he lived.

At the request also of Dr. Franklin and Dr. Fothergill, I wrote an address to the Dissenters on the subject of the approaching rupture with America, a pamphlet which Sir George Savile, and my other friends, circulated in great numbers, and it was thought with some effect.

After this I entirely ceased to write any thing on the subject of politics, except as far as the business of the *Test Act*, and of *Civil Establishments of Religion*, had a connexion with politics. And though, at the recommendation of Dr. Price, I was presently after this taken into the family of the Marquis of Lansdowne, and I entered into almost all his views, as thinking them just and liberal, I never wrote a single pamphlet,

pamphlet, or even a paragraph in a newspaper, all the time that I was with him, which was seven years.

I never preached a political sermon in my life, unless such as, I believe, all Dissenters usually preach on the fifth of November, in favour of *civil and religious liberty*, may be said to be political. And on these occasions, I am confident, that I never advanced any sentiment but such as, till of late years, would have tended to recommend, rather than render me obnoxious, to those who direct the administration of this country. And the doctrines which I adopted when young, and which were even popular then (except with the clergy, who were at that time generally disaffected to the family on the throne) I cannot abandon, merely because the times are so changed, that they are now become unpopular, and the expression and communication of them hazardous.

Farther, though I by no means disapprove of societies for political information, such as are now every where discountenanced, and generally suppressed, I never was a member of any of them; nor, indeed, did I ever attend any public meeting, if I could decently avoid it, owing to habits acquired in studious and retired life.

From a mistake of my talents and disposition, I was invited by many of the departments in France, to represent them in the present National Convention, after I had been made a citizen of France, on account of my being considered as one who had been persecuted for my attachment to the cause of liberty here. But though the invitation was repeated with

the most flattering importunity, I never hesitated about declining it.

I can farther say with respect to politics, concerning which I believe every Englishman has some opinion or other (and at present, owing to the peculiar nature of the present war, it is almost the only topic of general conversation) that, except in company, I hardly ever think of the subject, my reading, meditation, and writing, being almost wholly engrossed by theology, and philosophy; and of late, as for many years before the riots in Birmingham, I have spent a very great proportion of my time, as my friends well know, in my laboratory.

If, then, my real crime has not been *sedition*, or *treason*, what has it been? For every *effect* must have some adequate *cause*, and therefore the odium that I have incurred must have been owing to something in my declared sentiments, or conduct, that has exposed me to it. In my own opinion, it cannot have been any thing but my open hostility to the doctrines of the established church, and more especially to all civil establishments of religion whatever. This has brought upon me the implacable resentment of the great body of the clergy; and they have found other methods of opposing me besides *argument*, and that use of the *press* which is equally open to us all. They have also found an able ally and champion in Mr. Burke, who (without any provocation except that of answering his book on the French Revolution) has taken several opportunities of inveighing against me, in a place where he knows

I cannot

I cannot reply to him, and from which he also knows that his accusation will reach every corner of the country, and consequently thousands of persons, who will never read any writings of mine*. They have had another, and still more effectual vehicle of their abuse in what are called the *treasury newspapers*, and other popular publications.

By these and other means, the same party spirit which was the cause of the riots in Birmingham, has been increasing ever since, especially in that neighbourhood; a remarkable instance of which may be seen in a *Letter* addressed, but not sent, to me from *Mr. Foley, rector of Stourbridge*, who acknowledges the satisfaction that he and his brethren have received from one of the grossest and coarsest pieces of abuse of me that has yet appeared, which, as a curious specimen of the kind, I inserted in the *Appendix of my Appeal*, and in which I am represented as no better than Guy Fawkes, or the devil himself. This very Christian divine recommends to the members of the established church to decline all commercial dealings with Dissenters, as an effectual method of exterminating them. *Defce's Shortest Way with the*

* Mr. Burke having said in the House of Commons, that "I was made a citizen of France on account of my declared hostility to the constitution of this country," I, in the public papers, denied the charge, and called upon him for the proofs of it. As he made no reply, in the preface to my Fast Sermon of the last year, I said, p. 9, that "it sufficiently appeared that he had neither ability to maintain his charge, nor virtue to retract it." A year more of silence on his part having now elapsed, this is become more evident than before.

*Dissenters**, would have taught him a more effectual method still. And yet this Mr. Foley, whom I never saw, and who could not have had any particular cause of enmity to me, had, like Mr. Madan of Birmingham, a character for liberality. What, then, have we to expect from others, when we find so much bigotry and rancour in such men as these?

Many times, by the encouragement of persons from whom better things might have been expected, I have been burned in effigy along with Mr. Paine; and numberless insulting and threatening letters have been sent to me from all parts of the kingdom. It is not possible for any man to have conducted himself more peaceably than I have done all the time that I have lived at Clapton, yet it has not exempted me not only from the worst suspicions, but very gross insults. A very friendly and innocent club, which I found in the place, has been considered as *Jacobine* chiefly on my account; and at one time there was cause of apprehension that I should have been brought into danger for lending one of Mr. Paine's books. But with some difficulty the neighbourhood was satisfied that I was innocent.

As nothing had been paid to me on account of damages in the riot, when I published the second part of my *Appeal* to the public on the subject, it may be proper to say, that it was paid some time in the beginning of the year 1793, with interest only from the first of January of the same year, though the injury was received in July, 1791; when equity

* A tract written in a grave ironical stile, advising to hang them all.
evidently

evidently required, that it ought to have been allowed from the time of the riot, especially as, in all the cases, the allowance was far short of the loss. In my case it fell short, as I have shewn, not less than two thousand pounds. And the losses sustained by the other sufferers far exceeded mine. Public justice also required that, if the forms of law, local enmity, or any other cause, had prevented our receiving full indemnification, it should have been made up to us from the public treasury; the great end of all civil government being protection from violence, or an indemnification for it. Whatever we might in equity claim, the country owes us, and, if it be just, will some time or other pay, and with interest.

I would farther observe, that since, in a variety of cases, money is allowed where the injury is not of a pecuniary nature, merely because no other compensation can be given, the same should have been done with respect to me, on account of the destruction of my manuscripts, the interruption of my pursuits, the loss of a pleasing and advantageous situation, &c. &c. and had the injury been sustained by a *clergyman*, he would, I doubt not, have claimed, and been allowed, very large damages on this account. So far, however, was there any idea of the kind in my favour, that my counsel advised me to make no mention of my manuscript *Lectures on the Constitution and Laws of England*, a work about as large as that of Blackstone (as may be seen by the syllabus of the particular lectures, sixty-three in all, published in the first edition of my *Essay on a Course of liberal Education*

tion for civil and active Life) because it would be taken for granted that they were of seditious nature, and would therefore have been of disservice to me with the jury. Accordingly they were, in the account of my losses, included in the article of so much paper. After these losses, had I had nothing but the justice of my country to look to, I must have sunk under the burden, incapable of any farther exertions. It was the seasonable generosity of my friends that prevented this, and put it in my power, though with the unavoidable loss of near two years, to resume my former pursuits.

A farther proof of the excessive bigotry of this country is, that, though the clergy of Birmingham, resenting what I advanced in the first part of my *Appeal*, replied to it, and pledged themselves to go through with the enquiry along with me, till the whole truth should be investigated, they have made no reply to the *Second Part of my Appeal*, in which I brought specific charges against themselves, and other persons by name, proving them to have been the promoters and abettors of the riot; and yet they have as much respect shewn to them as ever, and the country at large pays no attention to it. Had the clergy been the injured persons, and Dissenters the rioters, unable to answer the charges brought against them, so great would have been the general indignation at their conduct, that I am persuaded it would not have been possible for them to continue in the country.

I could, if I were so disposed, give my readers
many

many more instances of the bigotry of the clergy of the church of England with respect to me, which could not fail to excite, in generous minds, equal indignation and contempt; but I forbear. Had I, however, foreseen what I am now witness to, I certainly should not have made any attempt to replace my library or apparatus, and I soon repented of having done it. But this being done, I was willing to make some use of both before another interruption of my pursuits. I began to philosophize, and make experiments, rather late in life, being near forty, for want of the necessary means of doing any thing in this way; and my pursuits have been much interrupted by removals (never indeed chosen by myself, but rendered necessary by circumstances) and my time being now short, I hoped to have had no occasion for more than one, and that a final, remove. But the circumstances above mentioned have induced me, though with great and sincere regret, to undertake another, and to a greater distance than any that I have hitherto made.

I profess not to be unmoved by the aspect of things exhibited in this Discourse. But notwithstanding this, I should willingly have awaited my fate in my native country, whatever it had been, if I had not had sons in America, and if I did not think that a field of public usefulness, which is evidently closing upon me here, might open to more advantage there.

I also own that I am not unaffected by such unexampled punishments as those of Mr. Muir and my
b friend

friend Mr. Palmer, for offences, which, if, in the eye of reason, they be any at all, are slight, and very insufficiently proved; a measure so subversive of that freedom of speaking and acting, which has hitherto been the great pride of Britons. But the sentence of Mr. Winterbotham, for delivering from the pulpit what I am persuaded he never did deliver, and which, similar evidence might have drawn upon myself, or any other dissenting minister, who was an object of general dislike, has something in it still more alarming*. But I trust that conscious innocence

* I trust that the friends of liberty, especially among the Dissenters, will not fail to do every thing in their power to make Mr. Winterbottom's confinement, and also the sufferings of Mr. Palmer and his companions, as easy to them as possible. Having been assisted in a season of persecution myself, I should be very ill deserving of the favours I have received, if I was not particularly desirous of recommending such cases as theirs to general consideration. Here difference in religious sentiment is least of all to be attended to. On the contrary, let those who in this respect differ the most from Mr. Winterbottom, which is my own case, exert themselves the most in his favour. When men of unquestionable integrity and piety suffer in consequence of acting (as such persons always will do) from a principle of *conscience*, they must command the respect even of their enemies, if they also act from principle, though they be thereby led to proceed in an opposite direction.

The case of men of education and reflection (and who act from the best intentions with respect to the community) committing what only *state policy* requires to be considered as *crimes*, but which are allowed on all hands to imply no moral turpitude, so as to render them unfit for heaven and happiness hereafter, is not to be confounded with that of common felons. There was nothing in the conduct of Louis XIV. and his ministers, that appeared so shocking, so contrary to all ideas of justice, humanity and decency, and that has contributed more to render their me-

memory

ence would support me as it does him, under whatever prejudiced and violent men might *do* to me, as well as *say* of me. But I see no occasion to expose myself to danger without any prospect of doing good, or to continue any longer in a country in which I am so unjustly become the object of general dislike, and not retire to another, where I have reason to think I shall be better received. And I trust that the same good Providence which has attended me hitherto, and made me happy in my present situation, and all my former ones, will attend and bless me in what may still be before me. In all events, *The will of God be done.*

I cannot refrain from repeating again, that I leave my native country with real regret, never expecting to find any where else society so suited to my disposition and habits, such friends as I have here (whose attachment has been more than a balance to all the abuse I have met with from others) and especially to replace one particular Christian friend, in whose absence I shall, for some time at least, find all the world a blank. Still less can I expect to resume my favourite pursuits, with any thing like the advantages I enjoy here. In leaving this country I also abandon a source of maintenance, which I can but ill bear to lose. I can, however, truly say, that I

more execrated, than sending such men as Mr. Marolles, and other eminent Protestants, who are now revered as saints and martyrs, to the galleys, along with the vilest miscreants. Compared with this, the punishment of death would be mercy. I trust that, in time, the Scots in general will think these measures a disgrace to their country.

leave

leave it without any resentment, or ill will. On the contrary, I sincerely wish my countrymen all happiness; and when the time for reflection (which my absence may accelerate) shall come, my countrymen, I am confident, will do me more justice. They will be convinced that every suspicion they have been led to entertain to my disadvantage has been ill founded, and that I have even some claims to their gratitude and esteem. In this case, I shall look with satisfaction to the time when, if my life be prolonged, I may visit my friends in this country; and perhaps I may, notwithstanding my removal for the present, find a grave (as I believe is naturally the wish of every man) in the land that gave me birth.

FAST SERMON,

FEBRUARY 28, 1794.

REPENT YE, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT
HAND! MATT. iii. 2.

THIS was the great burden of the preaching of both John the Baptist and of our Saviour. But as that *kingdom of heaven*, the approach of which they announced, and which, by our Saviour's direction, is the subject of our daily prayers, is not yet come, but much nearer than it was in their time, there must be a greater propriety in urging this exhortation at present, than there has ever yet been. It is nothing but repentance that can prepare sinful men (and all men are more or less sinners) to derive any advantage from this kingdom, in which Christ and the saints shall bear rule; that new state of the heavens and of the earth, in which *righteousness* only will dwell. And being a second time called upon by our rulers to humble ourselves before God, on account of the calamities we already feel, and those that we have reason to fear, and repentance being

the only means of averting his anger, and procuring a cessation, or mitigation, of his heavy judgments, I shall take this opportunity of urging it, from that very critical and truly alarming situation, in which almost the whole of Europe now finds itself, and this country of ours, as having most at stake, perhaps more than any other.

If we can learn any thing concerning what is before us, from the language of prophecy, great calamities, such as the world has never yet experienced, will precede that happy state of things, in which 'the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ;' and these calamities will chiefly affect those nations which have been the seat of the great antichristian power; or, as all Protestants, and I believe justly, suppose, have been subject to the see of Rome. And it appears to me highly probable, as I hinted in my last discourse on this occasion, that the present disturbances in Europe are the beginning of those very calamitous times. I therefore think there is a call for unusual seriousness, and attention to the course of Divine Providence, that when 'the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants thereof may learn righteousness,' so as to be prepared for whatever events the now rapid wheels of time may disclose. Let us then, my brethren, make a serious pause. Let us look back to the antient prophecies, and compare them with the present state of things around us, and let us then look to ourselves, to our

own

own sentiments and conduct, that we may feel and act as our peculiar circumstances require.

The future happy state of the world, when the Jews shall be restored to their own country, and be at the head of all the nations of the earth, was first distinctly mentioned by Isaiah, and other prophets who were nearly cotemporary with him; but it was first denominated *the kingdom of heaven*, and announced as to be administered by *the Son of Man*, or *the Messiah*, by Daniel. It was, however, by other prophets, given to a descendant of David. All Christians consider Jesus as this descendant of David, or the promised Messiah. The mistake which the Jews were under, arose from their wholly overlooking the suffering state of the Messiah, and imagining that his *first* coming would be that mentioned by Daniel, *in the clouds of heaven*; and consequently that his kingdom would commence on his first appearance.

Jesus, knowing himself to be the Messiah, never denied that, at a proper time, he would appear as a king; nor could there have been at that time any uncertainty about the meaning of the term *king*. When Pilate asked Jesus if he was a king, he acknowledged it, and added that he was sent to bear witness to *that*, as well as to other truths; though, to obviate the jealousy of Pilate, and the Roman government, he said that his kingdom was *not of this world*; so that it did not interfere with the governments which then existed in the world, being that

kingdom of heaven which was to take place hereafter, and to be exercised upon maxims very different from those of the then existing kingdoms.

Jesus also said that, when he should reign, his apostles would reign with him, and that they should 'sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' Paul also said, that 'the saints shall judge the world.' And it is remarkable that, in the original prophecy of Daniel, the administration of this kingdom of heaven is not said to be wholly confined to one person, but to be extended to many, Dan. vii. 18. 'The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever;' ver. 27. 'And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve, and obey him,' or rather, 'obey it.'

That this will be a proper *kingdom*, though a kingdom of righteousness, the object of which will be the happiness of the subjects of it, is farther evident from the other kingdoms which are to be overthrown in order to make way for it. For had it been that purely *spiritual kingdom* which some suppose, what occasion was there for the destruction of the other kingdoms; since they would not have interfered with it, but might have subsisted at the same time?

In the first vision of Nebuchadnezzar, interpreted by Daniel, this future kingdom of heaven is represented by 'a little stone, cut out of a mountain without hands,' which *smote* the image representing the preceding kingdoms, Dan. ii. 34. and 'brake it to pieces,' when itself 'became a great mountain, filling the whole earth.' In the interpretation of this vision, ver. 44, it is said, 'In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever;' evidently in the place of the other kingdoms. It is, therefore, an institution adapted to answer the purpose of them, but in a much better manner.

This kingdom, however, a kingdom of truth and righteousness, will not be established without the greatest convulsions, and the violent overthrow of other kingdoms. Every description, figurative or otherwise, of this great revolution, clearly implies violence, and consequently great calamity. The little stone *smiting* the image, and *breaking it in pieces*, is far from giving an idea of a peaceable revolution, but one that will be effected with great violence, and in a short time. The following language is peculiarly emphatical. 'Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold,' (all the materials of which the image consisted) 'broken to pieces together, and became as the chaff of the summer

‘ floor, and the wind carried them away, and no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.’ In the interpretation it is said, ver. 44, ‘ that this new kingdom shall break in pieces, and consume all the other kingdoms.’

The same awful conclusion may be drawn from the language used in the corresponding vision of Daniel himself, in the first year of Belshazzar, in which the four great empires, which in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream had been represented by the *four metals*, of which the image that he saw consisted, are represented by *four beasts*, and the last of them is said (Dan. vii. 11) not to die a natural death, but *to be slain*, and moreover, his *body destroyed, and given to the burning flame*. As, in the former vision, the ten kingdoms, into which the last, or the Roman empire was to be divided, were represented by the ten toes of the image; in this vision of Daniel they are represented by the ten horns of the last beast. These are said to be ten kingdoms, or thrones, and these thrones are said to be *cast down*, Dan. vii. 9. clearly implying violence in their dissolution.

In the language of prophecy, great, and especially sudden revolutions, in kingdoms and states, are frequently represented by *earthquakes*; and also the supreme powers on earth by the sun, moon, and stars. And, in agreement with the preceding view, suggested by Daniel, the prophet Haggai, who wrote after him, to comfort his countrymen in their low
and

and distressed circumstances, and gloomy prospects, when they were erecting a poor and contemptible temple, compared with that of Solomon, assures them, that the glory of the *latter house*, meaning, I am persuaded, not the house they were then building, for that was taken down by Herod; nor yet that of Herod, but the *last* house, the glorious temple described by Ezekiel, as to be built after the return of the Jews to their own country, should be greater than that of the former house built by Solomon. Haggai describes the great revolution that is to precede it in the following manner. Hag. ii. 6. 'For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.' What can be this *peace*, but the future peaceful and happy state of the world under the Messiah? and what can be this *shaking of the nations*, that is to precede it, but great convulsions, and sudden revolutions, such as we see now beginning to take place?

The last great power that is foretold, as to arise among the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire is to be divided, is represented by the *little horn*, which is said to arise after the ten, signifying, I

doubt not, the Papal power. It is said, Dan. vii. 20,
 ‘to have eyes, and a mouth that spake very great
 ‘things, whose look was more stout than his fellows,
 ‘which made war with the saints, and prevailed
 ‘against them, until the antient of days came, and
 ‘judgment was given to the saints of the Most High,
 ‘and the time came that the saints possessed the
 ‘kingdom.’ This power, in the interpretation of
 the vision, is said to be one that should ‘speak great
 ‘words against the Most High, and to wear out the
 ‘saints of the Most High, and to think to change
 ‘times and laws.’ It is added, ‘They shall be given
 ‘into his hand until a time, and times, and the di-
 ‘viding of time,’ the very period for the duration
 of the great antichristian power in the Revelation.

When the termination of this last power is de-
 scribed, it is said, ver. 26, ‘The judgment shall sit,
 ‘and they shall take away his dominion, to consume
 ‘and to destroy it unto the end,’ which clearly im-
 plies nothing of a peaceable nature, but something
 exceedingly violent and calamitous.

This is, no doubt, the same awful period that is
 spoken of in the last chapter of Daniel, ch. xii. ver. 1.
 ‘And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great
 ‘prince which standeth for the children of thy peo-
 ‘ple, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as
 ‘never was since there was a nation, even to that
 ‘same time; and at that time thy people shall be
 ‘delivered, every one that shall be found written in
 ‘the book. And many of them that sleep in the
 ‘dust

‘dust of the earth shall awake.’ For that the resurrection, at least in part, will take place at the commencement of this great period, is agreeable to the uniform language of scripture on the subject.

All the prophecies in the New Testament concerning the fall of Antichrist, and the commencement of the proper kingdom of heaven, and of Christ, exactly correspond with those which I have quoted from the Old Testament. The second coming of Christ is represented by the apostle Paul, 2 Thes. i. 7, as an event exceedingly awful, and dreadful to the wicked. ‘He will be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God.’

That the great antichristian power is to be destroyed at this second coming of Christ, and not properly before, and therefore that its final destruction will be sudden, is evident from what the same apostle says afterwards, 2 Thes. ii. 8. ‘Then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish;’ characters sufficiently evident of the church of Rome.

The account that is given, in the book of Revelation, of the commencement of the last great period, signified by the blowing of the *seventh trumpet*,
when

when the kingdoms of the earth are to become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ, Rev. ii. 15, is immediately preceded by the third, and probably far the greatest of the *three woes*, the first of which was occasioned by the conquests of the Saracens, and the second by those of the Turks, as the order of the events described under the preceding trumpets evidently implies. And the state of things at this time is described in the following emphatical language of the four and twenty elders, who are said, on this occasion, to fall on their faces, and to worship God, Rev. xi. 17. ‘We give thee thanks, O Lord God ‘Almighty, who art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power and ‘hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy ‘wrath is come, and the time of the dead that they ‘must be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward to thy servants the prophets, and shouldest ‘destroy them that destroy the earth *.’

We have here a wonderful concurrence of great events, and among these is the *anger of the nations*, followed by the *destruction of them that have destroyed the earth*. Now how has the earth been destroyed by the men who *have* destroyed it, but by desolating wars, and the destruction that has thereby been made of mankind? In like manner, then, may we con-

* On this subject I refer my readers to two sermons lately published by the Rev. Elkanan Winchester, entitled *The Three Woe Trumpets*, deserving the serious consideration of all Christians, who are attentive to the *signs of the times*.

clude that those destructive powers will themselves be destroyed, probably by one another, in those *wars* which the apostle James says arise from *men's lusts*, the lust of ambition and revenge. And when, my brethren, have we seen, or heard of, such anger and rage in nations, such violence in carrying on war, and such destruction of men, as at this very time? It is thought that the last campaign only has destroyed many more men than all the eight years of the American war, and probably more than the long war before it; and from the increased armaments of the belligerent powers, and their increasing animosity, it is probable that the approaching campaign will be more bloody than the last.

What has more eminently contributed to destroy the earth, than the antichristian and idolatrous ecclesiastical establishments of Christianity, that have subsisted in these western parts of the world; many more persons having been destroyed by Christians, as they have called themselves, than by Heathens? And do we not see one, and one of the principal, of those establishments already, and completely, destroyed?

A more highly wrought picture of the destruction and slaughter of men, that will precede this glorious period in which 'God will take to himself his great power and reign,' we find in the 19th chapter of the Revelation, which describes the triumph of the saints on the occasion. 'After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven,

‘ saying, Alleluia, Salvation, and glory, and honour,
‘ and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and
‘ right are his judgments. For he hath judged the
‘ great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her
‘ fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his ser-
‘ vants at her hand.’ That this has a connexion with
the second coming of Christ, appears from what im-
mediately follows, ver. 11. ‘ And I saw heaven open-
‘ ed, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon
‘ him was called faithful and true, and in righteous-
‘ ness he shall judge and make war. His eyes were
‘ as a flame of fire, and on his head were many
‘ crowns, and he had a name written which no man
‘ knew but he himself. And he was clothed in a
‘ vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called
‘ THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies which were
‘ in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed
‘ in fine linen, white and clean; and out of his mouth
‘ goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite
‘ the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of
‘ iron, and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierce-
‘ ness of the wrath of Almighty God. And he hath
‘ on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written,
‘ KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.’

That there will be literally great slaughter of
men on the occasion, is clearly indicated in what
follows, figurative and hyperbolical as the language
is, ver. 17. ‘ And I saw an angel standing in the sun,
‘ and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the
‘ fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and
‘ gather

‘gather yourselves together, unto the supper of the
 ‘great God, that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and
 ‘the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men,
 ‘and the flesh of horses, and them that sit on them,
 ‘and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both
 ‘small and great.’

The same is evident from the account of the
 pouring out of the third vial, Rev. xvi. 14, &c.
 ‘And the third angel poured out his vial on the ri-
 ‘vers and fountains of water, and they became
 ‘blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say,
 ‘Thou art righteous, O Lord, who art, and wast,
 ‘and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For
 ‘they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
 ‘and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they
 ‘are worthy.’

That this great slaughter will be made on the de-
 struction of the antichristian power, called in this
 book *the beast*, supported by *the kings of the earth*, is
 evident from the next verses, ver. 19. ‘And I saw
 ‘the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their
 ‘armies, gathered together, to make war against him
 ‘that sat on the horse, and against his army. And
 ‘the beast was taken, and with him the false pro-
 ‘phet, that wrought miracles before him, with which
 ‘he deceived them that had received the mark of
 ‘the beast, and them that worshipped his image.
 ‘These were both cast alive into a lake of fire
 ‘burning with brimstone. And the remnant were
 ‘slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse,
 ‘which

‘ which sword proceeded out of his mouth, and all
 ‘ the fowls were filled with their flesh.’

After this follows the description of the millennium,
 chap. xx. ver. 4. ‘ And I saw thrones, and they sat
 ‘ upon them, and judgment was given unto them;
 ‘ and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded
 ‘ for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God,
 ‘ and which had not worshipped the beast, neither
 ‘ his image, neither had received his mark upon
 ‘ their forehead, or in their hands, and they lived and
 ‘ reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest
 ‘ of the dead lived not again until the thousand years
 ‘ were finished. This is the first resurrection. Bless-
 ‘ ed and holy is he that hath part in the first resur-
 ‘ rection. On such the second death hath no power,
 ‘ but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ,
 ‘ and they shall reign with him a thousand
 ‘ years.’

To me it appears not improbable, that several
 circumstances in our Saviour’s prophecy concerning
 the destruction of Jerusalem, and the desolation of
 Judea, relate to this great and more distant period.
 For it was delivered in answer to a question put to
 him by his disciples, which respected both the events,
 on the idea of their being coincident. ‘ Tell us,’ say
 they, Matt. xxiv. 3, ‘ when shall these things be,
 ‘ and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of
 ‘ the end of the age.’ In answer to this, he says,
 first, as it is in Luke, whose account in this case
 seems to be the most orderly and distinct of any,
 chap.

chap. xxi. ver. 9. 'But when ye shall hear of wars,
'and commotions, be not terrified; for these things
'must first come to pass, but the end is not by and
'by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise
'against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and
'great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and fa-
'mines, and pestilences, and fearful sights, and great
'signs shall there be from heaven. But before all
'these they shall lay their hands on you, and perse-
'cute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and
'into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers
'for my name's sake.'

I am the more inclined to think that some things
in this prediction have this farther reference, because
in them Jesus expressly quotes the language of Da-
niel recited above, which unquestionably has this
reference; as when he says, Matt. xxix. 20. 'There
'shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the
'beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever
'shall be: And except those days should be short-
'ened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the
'elect's sake those days shall be shortened.'

It seems still more evident that this prediction ad-
mits of this interpretation, from what follows, which
exactly corresponds to the more ancient prophecies.
Mat. xxiv. 29. 'Immediately after the tribulation of
'those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon
'not give her light, and the stars shall fall from
'heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be
'shaken;' which are almost the very words of the
prophet

prophet Haggai quoted above. ‘And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’

That this great tribulation was a distant event, and did not respect the Jews, but the Gentiles, is probable from Jesus calling it, Luke xxi. 25, ‘the distress of nations,’ or ‘the nations,’ i. e. the ‘Gentiles,’ ‘men’s hearts,’ he subjoins, ‘failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. For the powers of heaven shall be shaken,’ that is, there will be great convulsions, and violent revolutions, in kingdoms and states; ‘And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in clouds, with power and great glory.’

That this tribulation is coincident with that which is to precede the restoration of the Jews, is probable from his saying immediately before, ver. 24, ‘Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,’ that is, till it shall come to be their turn to be punished; the destruction of the Gentiles, who had oppressed the Jews, commencing with the restoration of that highly favoured nation.

Jesus farther says, Luke xxi. 22. ‘These be the days of vengeance, that all the things which are
‘ written

‘written may be fulfilled.’ Now the only days of vengeance particularly announced by the antient prophets, to which Jesus here alludes, relate to the judgments of God upon the Gentiles who had shewn enmity to the Jews, and especially in their opposition to their re-settlement in their own country.

There is nothing more clear in the whole compass of prophecy, as I have shewn on another occasion, than that after the destined period for the dispersion and calamities of the Jews, the heaviest of all the divine judgments will fall upon those nations by whom they shall have been oppressed; and this will involve almost all the nations of the world, but more especially those of these western parts, which have been subject first to the Roman empire, and then to the see of Rome.

Moses says, Deut. xxx. 7. ‘The Lord thy God
 ‘will put all these curses’ (those which were threatened to fall upon them) ‘upon thine enemies, and
 ‘upon them that hate thee, and persecute thee.’ Isa. xliii. 25. ‘I will contend with them that contend
 ‘with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will
 ‘feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh,
 ‘and they shall be drunken with their own blood,
 ‘as with sweet wine, and all flesh shall know that I,
 ‘Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the
 ‘Mighty One of Jacob.’ Zeph. iii. 19. ‘Behold
 ‘at that time I will undo all that afflict thee.’ Jer. xxx. 11. ‘Though I make a full end of all the nations
 ‘whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not

‘make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure.’ Ezekiel, speaking of the happy times that will take place on the restoration of the Jews, says, chap. xxviii. ver. 26. ‘Yea they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them, and they shall know that I am Jehovah their God.’ Lastly, Zechariah says, chap. xii. ver. 9. ‘It shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.’

That there is to be a day of visitation for all the nations in this part of the world (all of whom have distinguished themselves so by their oppression and massacre of the Jews) will now, I presume, be sufficiently apparent, if there be any truth in prophecy. You will therefore naturally ask, if there be any ground for thinking, that those judgments are now about to take place; if so, how long they will probably continue, and when will be the commencement of the glorious and happy times that are to follow.

That those great troubles, so frequently mentioned in the antient prophecies, are now commencing, I do own I strongly suspect, as I intimated the last time that I addressed you on this occasion; and the events of the last year have contributed to strengthen that suspicion; the storm, however, may still blow over for the present; and the great scene of calamity be reserved for some future time, though I cannot think it will be deferred long.

As to the precise time when the scene of calamity

will terminate, and the proper kingdom of Christ will commence, he himself did not know, either before his death and resurrection, or afterwards. When he was questioned on the subject, he expressly said, Mark xiii. 32, 'But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.' When, after his resurrection, the disciples asked him, saying, Acts i. 6, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' he replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.' It is enough for us to know the certainty of these great events, that our faith may not fail on the approach of the predicted calamity, confident that it will have the happiest issue in God's own time. For the same Being who foretold the evil which we shall see come to pass, has likewise foretold the good that is to follow it.

That the second coming of Christ will be coincident with the commencement of the millennium, or the future peaceable and happy state of the world (which, according to all the prophecies, will take place after the restoration of the Jews) is evident from what Peter said, in his address to the Jews, on the occasion of his healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, Acts iii. 19. 'Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus

‘Christ, who before was preached unto you, whom
 ‘the heavens must receive until the times of the
 ‘restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by
 ‘the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world
 ‘began.’ Now nothing is more evident than that
 the only period that can be called the time of the
restitution of all things, or the paradisiacal and happy
 state of the world, foretold by the antient prophets,
 will follow the restoration of the Jews to their own
 country. This, and nothing else, is the great burden
 of all antient prophecy.

That this will be a joyful event to the Jewish
 nation, when they will be convinced, perhaps by his
 personal appearance among them, that he is their
 promised Messiah, actually coming in the clouds of
 heaven, appears from what our Saviour himself says,
 Mat. xxi. 9. Luke xiii. 35. ‘Verily I say unto you,
 ‘ye shall not see me until the time come when ye
 ‘shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of
 ‘the Lord;’ the very cry at which the Scribes and
 Pharisees were so much offended in the children,
 when Jesus entered Jerusalem. This very cry would
 then be that of the whole nation.

But though our Saviour could not fix the time of
 his second coming, or the commencement of his
 proper kingdom, he sufficiently forewarned his disci-
 ples of the signs of its approach, and of some circum-
 stances that will immediately precede it, to which it
 certainly behoves us to be attentive.

Before this great event the gospel is to be preach-
 ed

ed to all the world. Mat. xxiv. 14. 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached through all the world, for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come.' If by the whole world, we mean the Roman empire, this was accomplished before the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore may refer to that event. But it may have a farther reference, and now there is hardly any nation that has not had an opportunity of having the gospel preached to them; and the late wonderful extension of navigation, by which the whole of the habitable world has been explored by Christians, though this was by no means the object of the navigators, will, no doubt, be the means of carrying the knowledge of the gospel to a greater extent than ever; and the troubles of Europe will greatly contribute to the same end. Times of trouble make men serious. With these serious impressions on their minds many will fly to distant countries, and carry the knowledge of the gospel with them; and, it may be hoped, in greater purity, and consequently more worthy of their acceptance, than it has hitherto appeared to them.

Another preceding event, and of a more definite kind, is the great prevalence of infidelity, Luke xviii. 8. 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth.' Now the prevalence of infidelity of late years has been very remarkable in all countries in which antichristian hierarchies have been established. And certainly all civil establishments of Christianity, in which power is claimed to prescribe

articles of faith, to make laws to bind the consciences of Christians, and inflict temporal punishments for the violation of them, are properly antichristian. For, as Christians, we are commanded to acknowledge no man master upon earth, since one is our master, even Christ.

Moreover, such absurd doctrines have been established by human authority, and such horrid punishments have been inflicted upon men for obeying the dictates of conscience, under all those hierarchies, protestant ones not excepted, that the minds of men have revolted at them; and, shocked at such enormities, have thrown off the belief and profession of Christianity altogether. This was long ago the case in Italy, where the enormities of the court of Rome were the most conspicuous; and many of the cardinals, and some of the popes themselves, are well known to have been unbelievers.

That this has long been the case in France, is what no person acquainted with that country the last fifty years will deny. It is now become more generally known, because it has had a better opportunity of shewing itself. That, in similar circumstances, the same, or something approaching to it, would not appear to be the case with *us*, is more than those who are acquainted with the state of things in this respect will vouch for.

When I was myself in France in 1774, I saw sufficient reason to believe, that hardly any person of eminence, in church or state, and especially in the least degree eminent in philosophy, or literature,
(whose

(whose opinions in all countries are, sooner or later, adopted by others) were believers in Christianity; and no person will suppose that there has been any change in favour of Christianity in the last twenty years. A person, I believe now living, and one of the best informed men in the country, assured me, very gravely, that (paying me a compliment) I was the first person he had ever met with, of whose understanding he had any opinion, who pretended to believe Christianity. To this all the company assented. And not only were the philosophers, and other leading men in France, at that time unbelievers in Christianity, or deists, but *atheists*, denying the being of a God. Nay Voltaire himself, who was then living, was considered by them as a weak-minded man, because, though an unbeliever in revelation, he believed in a God.

When I asked these gentlemen what it was that appeared to them so incredible in Christianity, that they rejected it without farther examination (for they did not pretend to have employed much time on the subject) they mentioned the doctrines of transubstantiation, and the trinity, as things too palpably absurd to require any discussion. It is, without doubt, the civil establishment of such Christianity as this, at which the common sense of mankind will ever revolt, that makes so many unbelievers of persons who will not take the trouble to read the scriptures for themselves, or who have not sagacity or patience to see through the false glosses that have been so long put

upon them. These systems, and the blindness and obstinacy in the governing powers, in rejecting every proposal of reforming the most palpable abuses, and the most manifest oppressions, make unbelievers much faster than all rational Christians can unmake them.

Nothing, however, can ever counteract the fatal influence of such corrupt Christianity, as is supported by these hierarchies, which are also intolerably expensive and oppressive, but the exhibition of rational Christianity, with its proper evidence, by unitarian Christians. But these are yet so few, compared with the bulk of Christians, who are trinitarians, that superficial observers, as unbelievers in general are, who judge by the great mass, pay but little regard to their representations.

Happily, this infidelity is, in its turn, destroying those antichristian establishments which gave birth to it; and when this great revolution shall be accomplished, genuine unadulterated christianity, meeting with less obstruction, will not fail to recommend and establish itself by its own evidence, and become the religion of the whole world. True Christianity stands in no need of the aid of civil power.

This was the idea of the great Sir Isaac Newton, as appears from the evidence of the excellent Mr. Whiston, in the following passage of his *Essay on the Revelation*, 2d edition, p. 321. "Sir Isaac Newton
" had a very sagacious conjecture, which he told
" Dr.

“ Dr. Clarke, from whom I received it, that the
“ overbearing tyranny and persecuting power of the
“ antichristian party, which hath so long corrupted
“ Christianity, and enslaved the Christian world,
“ must be put a stop to, and broken to pieces by the
“ prevalence of infidelity, for some time, before pri-
“ mitive Christianity could be restored; which seems
“ to be the very means that is now working in Eu-
“ rope, for the same good and great end of Pro-
“ vidence. Possibly he might think that our Sa-
“ viour’s own words implied it: When the Son of
“ Man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?
“ Luke xviii. 8. See Constitut. Apost. vi. 18;
“ vii. 32; or possibly he might think no other way
“ so likely to do it in human affairs; it being, I
“ acknowledge, too sadly evident, that there is not
“ at present religion enough in Christendom, to put
“ a stop to such antichristian tyranny and persecution,
“ upon any genuine principles of Christianity.”

The concluding observation of Mr. Whiston ap-
pears to me to be very just. It seems probable that
no Christians, not even the freest, and boldest, would
ever have done what was necessary to be done, to
the overturning of these corrupt establishments of
Christianity, that unbelievers have lately done in
France.

This great event of the late revolution in France
appears to me, and many others, to be not improba-
bly the accomplishment of the following part of the
Revelation,

Revelation, chap. xi. 3. ‘ And the same hour there
 ‘ was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the
 ‘ city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men
 ‘ (or literally, *names of men*) seven thousand, and the
 ‘ remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to God.’

An earthquake, as I have observed, may signify a great convulsion, and revolution, in states; and as the Papal dominions were divided into ten parts, one of which, and one of the principal of them, was France, it is properly called *a tenth part of the city*, or of the mystical *Babylon*. And if by *names of men*, we understand their *titles*, such as those of the nobility, and other hereditary distinctions, all of which are now abolished, the accomplishment of the prediction will appear to be wonderfully exact. It is farther remarkable, that this passage immediately precedes what I have quoted before concerning the *nations being angry*, and the wrath of God being come, for the *destruction of those who have destroyed the earth*.

It is farther remarkable, that the kings of France were those who gave the Popes their temporalities, and the rank they now hold among the princes of the world. And it is foretold, Rev. xvii. 16, that ‘ those
 ‘ kings who gave their power and strength unto the
 ‘ beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make
 ‘ her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and
 ‘ burn her with fire. For God has put it in their
 ‘ hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree to give their
 ‘ kingdoms unto the beast, until the words of God
 ‘ shall be fulfilled.’

May

May we not hence conclude it to be highly probable, that what has taken place in France will be done in other countries? But the total destruction of this great antichristian power seems to be reserved for the second coming of Christ in person, by the *brightness of whose appearance*, and not before, he is, according to the apostle Paul, to be completely *destroyed*. And with this view, as well as others, every Protestant Christian should say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, 'come quickly.' In the mean time, let us attend to the solemn admonition in the Revelation xviii. 4. 'I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Come out of 'her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, 'and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her 'sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities *.'

* That the opinion here advanced, concerning the danger of the civil powers of Europe, in consequence of their connexion with antichristian ecclesiastical systems, has been long entertained by me, may appear from the following extract from my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 484. "It is no-
" thing but the alliance of the kingdom of Christ with the king-
" doms of this world (an alliance which our Lord himself ex-
" pressly disclaimed) that supports the grossest corruptions of
" Christianity; and perhaps we must wait for the fall of the civil
" powers before this most unnatural alliance be broken. Cala-
" mitous, no doubt, will that time be. But what convulsion in
" the political world ought to be a subject of lamentation, if it
" be attended with so desirable an event? May the kingdom of
" God, and of Christ, (that which I conceive to be intended
" in the Lord's Prayer) truly and fully come, though all the
" kingdoms of the world be removed in order to make way for
" it."

As

As the second coming of Christ will be during the general prevalence of infidelity, so it will be sudden, and most unexpected. This is the language of our Saviour himself, Mat. xxiv. 37. ‘As the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating, and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, unto the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.’ Luke xvii. 28. ‘Likewise, also as it was in the days of Lot. They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, he rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be when the Son of Man is revealed.’ The apostle Paul also says, 1 Thes. v. 2. ‘Yourselfes know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.’

But sudden and unexpected as the coming of Christ will be, it will be most conspicuous. Speaking of his return, he says, Mat. xxiv. 26. ‘If they shall say unto you, Behold he’ (i. e. the Messiah) ‘is in the desert, go not forth. Behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west,

‘west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man
‘be.’ As the ascent of Jesus was conspicuous, and
probably leisurely, so will be his descent. While
the disciples were viewing him as he ascended, we
read, Acts i. 10, ‘two men stood by them in white
‘apparel, who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why
‘stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus,
‘who is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in
‘like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.’
Here is no figurative language, no ambiguous ex-
pression. Neither is there in what the apostle says
concerning the resurrection of the virtuous dead,
which will take place at the coming of Christ,
which, in the Revelation is called *the first resurrec-*
tion, 1 Thes. iv. 14. ‘If we believe that Jesus died,
‘and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Je-
‘sus shall God bring with him. For this we say
‘unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we who
‘are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord,
‘shall have no advantage over those who are asleep.
‘For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven,
‘with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and
‘with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ
‘shall rise first. Then we who are alive, and re-
‘main, shall be caught up together with them in the
‘clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall
‘we ever be with the Lord.’ Again he says, 1 Cor.
xv. 51. ‘We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be
‘changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,
‘at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and
‘the

‘the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall
‘be changed.’

The certainty of this great catastrophe should be a sufficient motive with all Christians, who, as such, entertain no doubt with respect to the fact, to keep it constantly in view, and to regulate their whole conduct with a view to it. But if we apprehend it to be in a stricter sense of the word really *near*, which, from the present aspect of things, I own I am inclined to think may be the case, our attention is drawn to it in a most forcible manner. Did we really expect to see this great event, viz. the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, we should hardly think or speak of any thing else; and the present commotions in the political world, extraordinary as they certainly are, would appear as nothing in comparison with it. What would otherwise be *great*, would, with respect to this, seem exceedingly *little*, and insignificant.

What then, my brethren, is the practical inference that we should draw from finding, or even suspecting, ourselves to be in this situation, the kingdom of heaven being at hand, but to repent, and by a change of heart and of life to be prepared for it; that
‘when our Lord shall return, and take an account
‘of his servants, we may be found of him without
‘spot and blameless, and not be ashamed before him
‘at his coming?’ ‘Seeing,’ as the apostle Peter says,
‘we look for these things, what manner of persons
‘ought we to be, in all holy conversation and god-
‘liness.’

The

The aspect of things, it cannot be denied, is, in the highest degree, alarming, making life, and every thing in it, peculiarly uncertain. What could have been more unexpected than the events of any one of the last four years, at the beginning of it? What a total revolution in the ideas, and conduct of a whole nation! What a total subversion of principles, what reverses of fortune, and what a waste of life! In how bloody and eventful a war are we engaged, how inconsiderable in its beginning, how rapid and wide in its progress, and how dark with respect to its termination! At first it resembled Elijah's cloud, appearing no bigger than a *man's band*; but now it covers, and darkens, the whole European hemisphere!

Now, whatever we may think, as politicians (and with us every man will have his own opinion, on a subject so interesting to us all) I would, in this place, admonish you not to overlook the hand of God in the great scene that is now opening upon us. Nothing can ever come to pass without his appointment, or permission; and then, whatever be the views of men, we cannot doubt, but that his are always wise, righteous, and good. Let us, therefore, exercise faith in him, believing that though 'clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are for ever the habitation of his throne' All those who appear on the theatre of public affairs, in the field, or the cabinet, both those whom we praise, and those whom we blame, are equally instruments in his hands, and execute all his pleasure. Let this reflection,

tion, then, in our cooler moments, (and I hope we shall endeavour, in all the tumult of affairs, to make these as many as possible) lead us to look more to God, and less to man; and consequently, in all the troubles in which we may be involved, repose the most unshaken confidence in him, and thence 'in 'patience possess our own souls,' especially when it is evident that it is wholly out of our power to alter the course of events. If we be careful so to live as to be at all times prepared to die, what have we to fear, even though, as the Psalmist says, the 'earth be 'removed, and the mountains be carried into the 'midst of the sea?' Whatever turn the course of things may take, it cannot then be to our disadvantage. What, then, should hinder our contemplating the great scene, that seems now to be opening upon us, awful as it is, with tranquillity, and even with satisfaction, from our firm persuasion, that its termination will be glorious and happy?

Lastly, the more there are who indulge these enlarged and just views, who cultivate a sense of piety to God (which will always lead us to suppress resentment, and to promote goodwill towards men) the more favour, in the righteous administration of Providence, will be shewn to the country in which they shall be found. God, we know, would have spared even Sodom, if so many as ten righteous men had been found in it; and our Saviour, alluding, as I am inclined to think, to these very times, which seem to be approaching, says, that 'for the elect's sake they

February 28, 1794.

33

‘will be shortened.’ For our own sakes, therefore, for the sake of our friends, of our country, and of every thing that is dear to us in it, let us attend to the admonition of my text, ‘to repent, for the ‘kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ It is ‘righteousness that exalteth a nation’, and ‘sin’ only is the ‘reproach,’ and will be the ruin, ‘of any people.’

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APPENDIX.

HAVING originally got the leading ideas that are enlarged upon in the preceding discourse from *Dr. Hartley's Observations on Man*, a work published in 1749, I think it may not be amiss to subjoin to it some extracts from that work, as, from his authority, the serious apprehensions with which I have, ever since I read it, been impressed, will receive more weight, than they could acquire from any person, who, writing in these times, might be supposed to be particularly influenced by the aspect of them, and by his own situation with respect to them. I wish likewise by this, as well as every other means, to direct the attention of my readers to that most excellent work, to which I am indebted, if I may so say, for the whole moral conformation of my mind.

“ How near the dissolution of the present governments, generally or particularly, may be, would be great rashness to affirm. Christ will come in this sense also ‘as a thief in the night.’ Our duty is therefore to watch and to pray; to be faithful stewards; to give meat, and all other requisites, in due season, to those under our care; and to endeavour by these, and all other lawful means, to preserve the government, under whose protection we live, from dis-

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solution,

solution, seeking the peace of it, and submitting to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. No prayers, no endeavours of this kind can fail of having some good effect, public or private, for the preservation of ourselves and others. The great dispensations of Providence are conducted by means that are either secret, or, if they appear, that are judged feeble and inefficacious.—No man can tell, however private his station may be, but his fervent prayer may avail to the salvation of much people. But it is more peculiarly the duty of magistrates thus to watch over their subjects, to pray for them, and to set about the reformation of all matters civil and ecclesiastical, to the utmost of their power. Good governors may promote the welfare and continuance of a state, and wicked ones must accelerate its ruin."

"The sacred history affords us instances of both kinds, and they are recorded there for the admonition of kings and princes in all future times." V. ii. p. 368.

"There are many prophecies which declare the fall of the ecclesiastical powers of the Christian world. And though each church seems to flatter itself with the hopes of being exempted; yet it is very plain that the prophetic characters belong to all. They have all left the true, pure, simple religion, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. They are all merchants of the earth, and have set up a kingdom of this world, abounding in riches, temporal power, and external pomp. They have all a dogmatizing spirit, and persecute such as do not

receive their own mark, and worship the image which they have set up. They all neglect Christ's command of preaching the gospel to all nations, and even that of going to 'the lost sheep of the house of 'Israel;' there being innumerable multitudes in all Christian countries who have never been taught to read, and who are in other respects also destitute of the means of saving knowledge. 'Tis very true that the church of Rome is 'Babylon the great and the 'mother of harlots,' and of the 'abominations of the 'earth.' But all the rest have copied her example more or less. They have all received money like *Gebazi*; and therefore the leprosy of *Naaman* will cleave to them, and to their seed for ever. And this impurity may be considered, not only as justifying the application of the prophecies to all the Christian churches, but as a natural cause for their downfall. The corrupt governors of the several churches will ever oppose the true gospel, and in so doing will bring ruin upon themselves." P. 371.

"As the downfall of the Jewish state under Titus was the occasion of the publication of the gospel to us Gentiles, so our downfall may contribute to the restoration of the Jews, and both together bring on the final publication and prevalence of the true religion. Thus the type and the thing typified will coincide. The first fruits and the lump are made holy together." P. 375.

"The downfall of the civil and ecclesiastical powers must both be attended with such public calamities, as will make men serious, and also

drive them from the countries of *Christendom* into the remote parts of the world, particularly into the East and West-Indies; whither, consequently, they will carry their religion, now purified from errors and superstitions." P. 377.

"That worldly-mindedness, and neglect of duty in the clergy, must hasten our ruin, cannot be doubted. These are 'the salt of the earth,' and the 'light of the world.' If they lose their favour, the whole nation, where this happens, will be converted into one putrid mass. If their light become darkness, the whole body politic must be dark also. The degeneracy of the court of *Rome*, and secular bishops abroad, are too notorious to be mentioned. They almost cease to give offence, as they scarce pretend to any function or authority besides what is temporal. Yet still there is great mockery of God in their external pomp, and profanation of sacred titles; which, sooner or later, will bring down vengeance upon them. And as the court of *Rome* has been at the head of the great apostasy, and corruption of the Christian church; and seems evidently marked out in various places of the scriptures, the severest judgments are probably reserved for her. But I rather choose to speak to what falls under the observation of all serious, attentive persons in this kingdom. The superior clergy are in general, ambitious, and eager in the pursuit of riches; flatterers of the great, and subservient to party interest; negligent of their own immediate charges, and also of the inferior clergy, and

and their immediate charges. The inferior clergy imitate their superiors, and in general take little more care of their parishes than barely what is necessary to avoid the censure of the law. And the clergy of all ranks are, in general, either ignorant, or if they do apply, it is rather to profane learning, to philosophical or political matters, than to the study of the scriptures, of the Oriental languages, of the fathers, and ecclesiastical authors, and of the writings of devout men in different ages of the church. I say this is in general the case; i. e. far the greater part of the clergy of all ranks in this kingdom are of this kind. But there are some of a quite different character; men eminent for piety, sacred learning, and the faithful discharge of their duty, and who, it is not to be doubted, mourn in secret for the crying sins of this and other nations. The clergy, in general, are also far more free from open and gross vices, than any other denomination of men amongst us, physicians, lawyers, merchants, soldiers, &c. However, this may be otherwise hereafter. For it is said that in some foreign countries the superior clergy, in others the inferior, are as corrupt and abandoned, or more so, than any other order of men. The clergy in this kingdom seem to be what one might expect from the mixture of good and bad influences that affect them. But then, if we make this candid allowance for *them*, we must also make it for persons in the high ranks of life, for their infidelity, lewdness, and sordid self-interest.

And though it becomes an humble, charitable and impartial man, to make all these allowances, yet he cannot but see, that the judgments of God are ready to fall upon us all for these things; and that they may fall first, and with the greatest weight, upon those, who, having the highest office committed to them in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, neglect it, and are become mere 'merchants of the 'earth,' and 'shepherds that feed themselves, and 'not their flocks.' P. 450.

"These are my real and earnest sentiments upon these points. It would be great rashness to fix a time for the breaking of the storm that hangs over our heads, as it is blindness and infatuation not to see it; nor to be aware, that it may break. And yet this infatuation has always attended all falling states. The kingdoms of Judah and Israel, which are the types of all the rest, were thus infatuated. It may be, that the prophecies concerning Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Egypt, &c. will become applicable to particular kingdoms before their fall, and warn the good to flee out of them. And Christendom in general seems ready to assume to itself the place and lot of the Jews, after they had rejected their Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Let no one deceive himself, or others. The present circumstances of the world are extraordinary and critical, beyond what has ever yet happened. If we refuse to let Christ reign over us, as our Redeemer and Saviour, we must be slain before his face, as enemies, at his second coming." 455.

To

To these passages from Dr. Hartley, I shall add another from an excellent *Sermon preached in the chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, December 13, 1793, the day appointed for the commemoration of the Benefactors to that Society.* p. 13, &c.

“Nature recoils with horror at the spectacle now presented by their unfortunate country [France]. Under the guidance, however, of divine revelation, the contemplative mind may discern the signs of these times, and the hand of Providence directing the madness of the people. The oracles of truth, when foretelling the persecutions to be endured by Christians, assure us, ‘He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword.’ *They have shed (saith the angel) the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.* Destruction awaits the persecutor. And it must excite our astonishment to see vestiges of this righteous dispensation in what is passing before us. Lyons is recorded in early history, as the spot where a company of Martyrs glorified God. Lyons is now devoted, and its name erased from the memory of man. Paris once streamed with the blood of the Hugonots: Paris hath since been dyed with the slaughter of that court and clergy, which instigated the unutterable deed.”

“Let us, too, be honest in declaring, whether if the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, the revocation of the edict of Nantz, or a Spanish act of faith, were dictated by the spirit of Antichrist; the deprivation
of

of the TWO THOUSAND ejected Ministers; the severities which forced our countrymen to take refuge in the wilds of America, and the two religious conflagrations, which have disgraced our own days, demonstrated the presiding influence of a mind like that which was in Jesus."

"One particular in which the prophecy appears to enlighten us, is the fate of the Gallican church. The revolted city of the apocalypse is supposed to represent the Antichristian community established in the European territory of the western Roman empire, still subsisting in its pollarchical and dismembered state. Of this city it is written, that the fall of a tenth part would a short time precede that of the rest; and that its overthrow would be accompanied by an earthquake, and the destruction of *seven chiliads of the names of men*. As France was one of the ten kingdoms founded on the ruins of the western empire; as violent commotions are now agitating the political world, from the Borysthenes to the Atlantic; as seven classes have lately been deprived of their privileges and titles; the curiosity of the Christian scholar is beyond measure excited; and will be gratified with the discovery of various circumstances which will confirm his faith; but which a desire of brevity obliges me to refer to his private consideration. One question, however, I cannot help proposing; that if *we* be of that chosen people who have in truth come out of Babylon, who partake not of her sins, and merit not her plagues, why should we
appear

appear unprepared, or disinclined, to comply with the angelic mandate, and begin, at least, some prelude to that song of triumph, 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles, and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.'

"The legislators of France are Deists! While they expatiated freely in every region of useful science, they were enjoined to *"take for granted"* those controversial matters of religion, their forefathers had some good reason for adhering to *." — "They were not permitted to distinguish the doctrines of our Lord from those of their church. Their mind arrived at maturity in some points, disdained the puerilities on which they dared not speculate; and rejected the gospel, on account of the meretricious dress in which it was introduced to them."

"The legislators of France are deists! Much as we may lament their infidelity in their private capacity, we rejoice that, as lawgivers, they are unbelievers. Indifferent alike to all professions, and all sects, they will not form an unnatural alliance with one, nor proscribe all others with civil incapacities, imprisonment, and death. Every persuasion will enjoy their equal and wise protection; and genuine Christianity, undisguised with absurd confessions, and not made contemptible by ridiculous ceremonies, will exert her

* This is quoted from a speech of Dr. Milner, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, on the trial of Mr. Frend.

proper energies; will present to the understanding of the individual her miraculous credentials of prophecies completed in our time; and gain her establishment, not in word, but in deed; not in the civil code, but in the heart; not as a necessary engine of the state, but as the truth, and the way to eternal life. Superstition will no longer "rear her mitred front in "their courts and parliaments *;" but the dominion of Christ, triumphant in that country, will be an earnest of his obtaining the 'heathen for his inheritance, 'and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.'

* Alluding to Mr. Burke's encomium on the Church of England.

THE END.



